LOADSTAR LETTER #53

George WM. Reed
of Ohio
Wins The
LOADSTAR
Letter Sweepstakes!

SuperCPU 128 Update

January 07, 1998. From CMD's Web page,

http://www.cmdweb.com

The SuperCPU 128 production has begun. The first 100 boards are in process and due to begin shipping shortly. Customers who have confirmed their deposit and payment method will be the first to receive their units. If you have placed a advanced deposit but have not received a confirmation from CMD in the mail,

please contact CMD immediately at 413-525-0023.

Creative Micro Designs, Inc.
P.O. Box 646
15 Benton Drive
East Longmeadow, MA 01028-0646

Phone Numbers
Orders: 1-800-638-3263
Info/Support: 1-413-525-0023
Fax: 1-413-525-0147

E-mail
CMD Technical Support
(support@cmdweb.com)
CMD Sales Department
(sales@cmdweb.com)
Commodore World Magazine
(cw@cmdweb.com)

Wheels - The All-New Operating System Upgrade For GEOS 2.0 Announced

From Maurice Randall's Web Page. Designed and created by Maurice Randall, Wheels 64 was known as "Project G" during the last several months of development. This is the first major upgrade to the GEOS operating system since 1988. Here's a brief rundown of the major highlights of this new system:

Dashboard 64

This is the new replacement for the desktop. With the Dashboard, you'll navigate around your system like you've never been able to before. Open up as many as 16 windows to any partition or subdirectory you want. Unlike the desktop, the Dashboard knows your CMD devices.

Toolbox 64

Forget all those Configure files you had to put up with before. The Toolbox will let you boot from any setup you can put together. Nothing is more simple than booting up into the Wheels environment.

MakeSysDisk

Afraid your boot disk will someday get damaged? Wheels comes with this nifty utility that allows you to create your own boot disks or bootable partitions on your CMD devices.

The Wheels Operating System

The heart of this new system lies in the considerable modifications and enhancements that went into the development of the operating system kernal. Included in this are a total of 14 new disk drivers designed to better handle all the popular disk drives and ramdisks.

Software and hardware requirements: Commodore 64 or 128 (in 64 mode) 1541 or 1571 for initial installation GEOS 64 V2.0 (Wheels is sold as an upgrade) Original GEOS boot disk for the installation Ram expansion (all popular types are supported)

NEWS UPDATE FOR JANUARY 12, 1998... Wheels 64 is now in its final development stages. Documentation is in the proofreading stage. Shipping is expected to begin sometime in February. Work on the 128 version will begin soon.

Advance orders for Wheels 64 are now being accepted Price: $36 plus shipping and handling*

(* add $4 for North American addresses or $6 for International)
(Includes Installation Disk and Owner's Manual)

To place an advance order send a check or money order in U.S. funds to:

Maurice Randall
Click Here Software Co.
P.O. Box 606
Charlotte MI 48813
(517) 543-5202
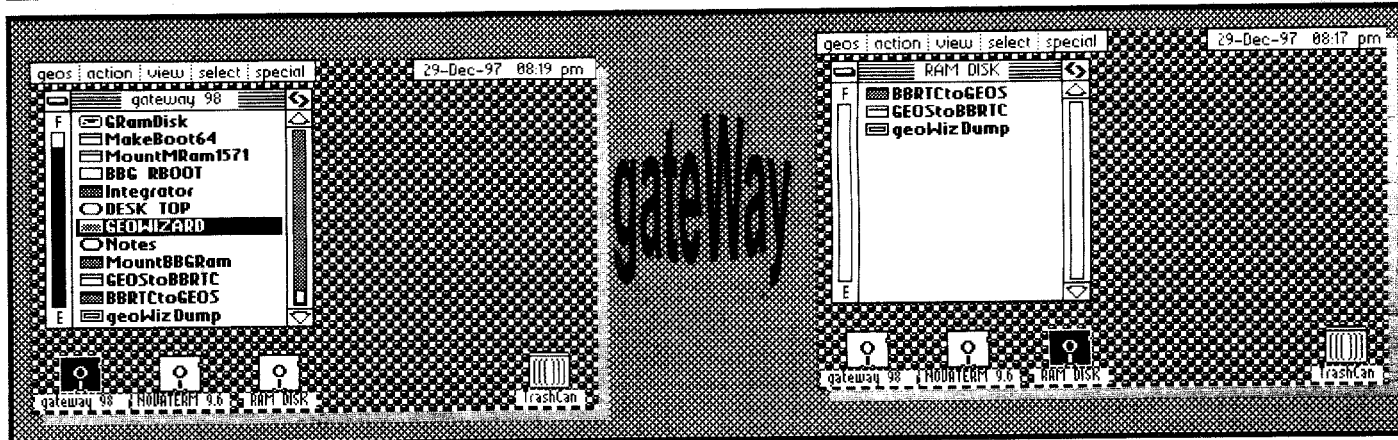
GEOS Possibilities

By John Elliott. GEOS was one of the first Commodore programs to use the ram expansion unit (REU). Any version after GEOS 1.2 will permit configuration of the REU as a second or third disk drive. GEOS is enhanced considerably by this hardware addition. Since many GEOS programs and files are bigger than the C-64's memory, it is necessary to use a disk drive as an extension of the computer ram (i.e. as virtual memory). Commodore disk drives are slow. GEOS programs then are slow partly because the disk drive must be frequently accessed. If the REU is the drive that is accessed though, this memory swapping is much faster, since the REU has no moving mechanical parts. If the entire program and created files are placed in the REU, then work can proceed even more quickly.

The other advantage of the REU is that if a computer reset takes place, it is still possible to reboot GEOS and recover the files that were open, so long as computer power has not been lost. Computer lock ups become less disastrous. It also becomes possible to exit to basic, run a basic program, and then return to GEOS without losing the files that were open.

Commodore REUs came in three sizes: 128k, 256k, and 512k. The second and third units could create

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PRICES OF SOME OF THE MENTIONED PRODUCTS

CMD 1750 512K REU	$99.00
CMD 1750XL 2MB REU	$139.00
gateWay 64 or 128	29.95

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respectively 1541 ram and 1571 ram drives that would be treated in most ways like a physical drive. The 128k unit cannot mimic a Commodore drive. I imagine however, that it could with GEOS 1.3 or newer, speed up disk operations, and perhaps allow a reboot of a GEOS program. The GEOS 2.0 RAM 1541 has 165k, the RAM 1571 331k.

128 Support: GEOS 2.0 can be run on a 128 in 64 mode. A separate 128 version can be purchased. Not all applications work in 128 mode. Two REU problems and the BBG: Third parties have expanded some REUs up to at least 2 megabytes. GEOS will not however, recognize a ram disk larger than 512k (as a ram 1571 drive). When the computer power is turned off, the REU loses its contents. REU memory then, is "volatile."

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gateWay Information (From CMD's web page.)

GateWay offers a unique, streamlined approach to file management under GEOS. With a resizable Note Pad, proportional slider and fuel gauge, the gateWay makes it easier to get where you're going. Convenient Status Boxes will indicate current copy or delete status and brand new disk and file Info Boxes let you quickly get the information you want. An integrated Control Panel replaces Preferences, and lets you choose your colors, background pattern, input and printer drivers, set the clock, and define function keys. The gateWay also provides a file locating browse feature, and a new Trash Can mechanism that never throws away files until you tell it to. Powerful Device Support

Three drive support with auto swapping (for applications which recognize only two drives) allows you to launch your applications and copy to and from drive C directly. GateWay also eliminates the need for CONFIGURE by using 'disk driver' files which collectively require less space on your boot disk. For CMD HD Series hard drives, FD Series floppy drives, and RAMLink, gateWay provides access to multiple 1581 or CMD Native partitions, or even CMD Native partition subdirectories. The gateWay also provides access to up to 2 Megabytes of RAM in a Commodore REU or a GEORAM. And to help you identify your disks quickly, gateWay allows you to individually define disk icons using any existing file icon.

Do you use RAM expansion? Then you can access multiple tasks with the gateWay's Switcher, which allows two separate tasks to run concurrently. Imagine having geoWrite and geoPaint running at the same time. Imagine the ease with which you could paste graphics and text scraps between them. Plus the ability to quit from either application and launch another at any time. Only with the gateWay - a whole new integrated way of working with GEOS.
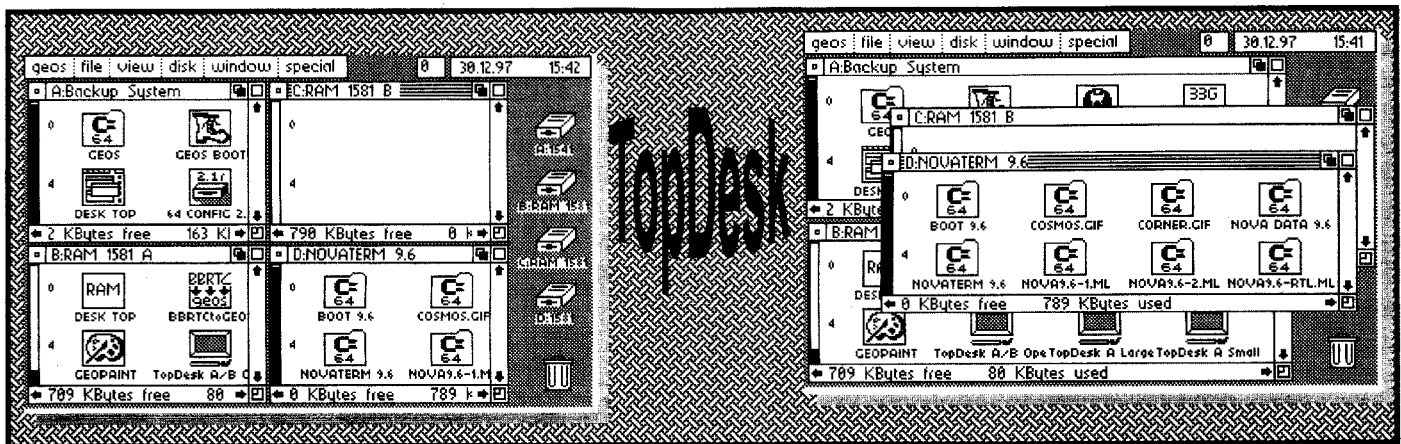
GW-64 - gateWay 64 for GEOS 64 v2.0
GW-128 - gateWay 128 for GEOS 128 v2.0

Note: Gateway requires GEOS v2.0 or GEOS128 v2.0, and a minimum system consisting of at least one 1541 or 1571 disk drive, a mouse or joystick and 512K RAM Expansion. For best results, CMD recommends at least 1 MB of RAM.

Peter Fissett of PPI solved the memory volatility and 512k maximum problems simultaneously with his BBG ram expansion unit. I own a 2-megabyte BBG unit. It has its own AC/DC power supply. It also has a battery back up pack that runs off of four flashlight batteries. I can shut down my computer while working with GEOS in my BBG, return several minutes, hours or days later, run a short BBG reboot program, and within a few seconds have access to several applications and whatever files I was previously working on.

I also obtained from Peter a BBU power unit that provides continuous power to my 512k 1750 REU. While it can also work with GEOS as a 1571 ram, I normally use it with my Novaterm 9.6 terminal program to give me a permanent buffer.

Peter solved the maximum of one 1571 ram drive problem by configuring the BBG for up to five simultaneous 1571 ram drives, which can be switched on alternately, but only one at a time. When I click on the BBG program, I see a menu of the letters "A" to "E". If I rename each drive to one of these

letters, I can use the 512k (331 after housekeeping) of storage in each drive to store different applications and files. Each drive functions as a directory of the BBG.

Peter has retained the look and functions of the standard GEOS 2.0. All icons are in their normal locations, as are the drop menus. Unfortunately, Peter went out of business a few years ago. Advertisements placed in the Commodore newsgroup on the Net might obtain a second hand unit. This unique adaptation does not work with my BBU/1750 REU combination. The BBG is however a geoRAM clone.

Others who have a geoRAM expanded beyond 512k might want to borrow a copy of the software, however, since I do not know of any other GEOS system that allows retention of the look and feel of GEOS 2.0 while using more than 512k on an REU. BBG works in 64 or 128 mode.

GateWay from CMD: Another system was developed in 1991 specifically to take advantage of the extra memory available in CMD hard drives and RAMLink, and the PPI

RAMDrive. In these three cases, up to 16 megabytes of ram can be addressed with the CMD gateWay GEOS system. It will use simultaneously up to 2 megabytes of an REU or geoRAM. The advantage of the gateWay is that it is still for sale. Recently, CMD was also selling REUs.

The look and feel is not of GEOS 2.0. There are no large, colorful icons. The entire 256k-2 megabyte REU directory scrolls as it would with most Commodore programs. Files can be quickly and easily switched within the directory. The directory pad size can be changed. Most other GEOS 2.0 capabilities have been retained.

The "Special Menu" includes as new features the ability to search a directory by file name (useful when you have 2 megabytes of files), and open partitions on CMD devices. This will not work with the 1581.

Size Accommodations: gateWay makes different uses of the three sizes of REU. The 128k model will be used to enable the mounting of three "real" disk drives, and the use of the task switcher. 256k makes possible a 1541 ram drive
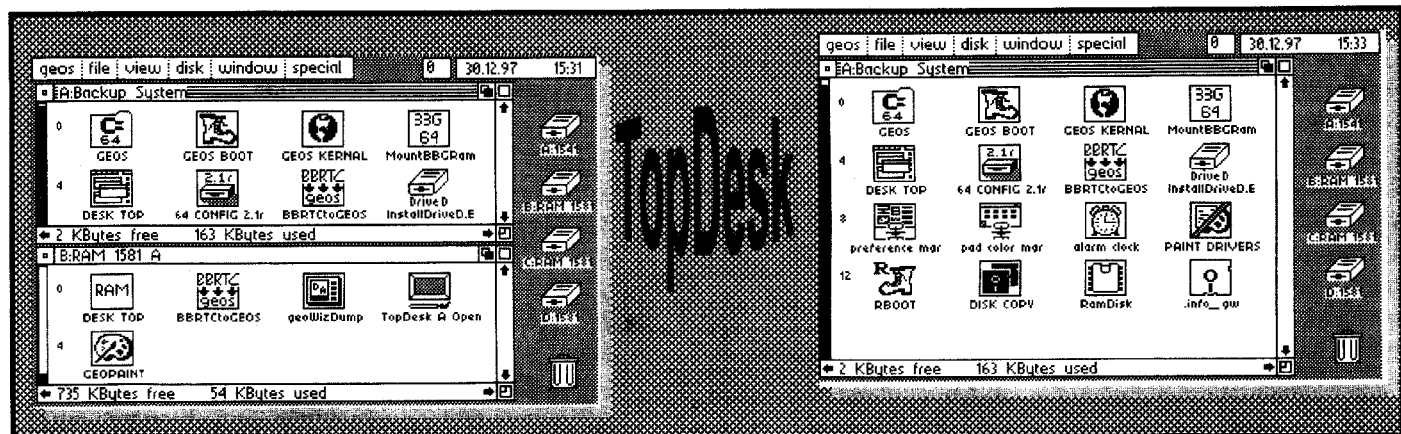
for a total of three drives, but no switcher. A 512k or larger REU will allow task switching, three drives, including a ram disk as large as the REU memory up to two megabytes.

The gateWay ram disk for the 256K REU gives 166K as opposed to the GEOS 165K. The 512K REU has 384K while GEOS only provides 331.

Drive C: There is a Catch 22 with the GEOS third drive. Although it is visible on the desktop (if an REU is installed), it can only be used if it is swapped for the first or second drive.

No applications can be run from drive C. No file copying can take place between C and other drives. GateWay improves this situation. Although gateWay does not do disk copying, it does file copy. All the files on the disk can be auto-selected and copied between any two of the three disks. File copying can involve drive C.

I can start an application such as geoWrite in drive C. That drive will swap positions with drive A, and run. If I click on a geoWrite data document in drive B or A, it will draw on the geoWrite application in C, without swapping drive positions. I was not able to get the geoWrite application residing in drive B or A to recognize data files which were in drive C.

Combination GEOS Operating Systems: With gateWay and BBG Ram and the Desktop files on the same disk I was able to obtain the best of both worlds. With the gateWay mode on and my third drive (a 1581) turned off, I was able to split my 2 meg BBGram into two 1581 ram drives, as drives B and C. This gave the benefit of partitions, so that each part of the ram device could be devoted to a different GEOS purpose. I was also able to bring up the Desktop GEOS 2.0 mode, and have each of my five ram disks use the gateWay environment.

Both effects were achieved by trial and error, and saved to disk for reuse. I have not yet figured out a reliable way of setting up these two configurations.

GateWay Terminate and Stay: With gateWay it is possible to open one application, leave it while it is still open, and open a second application. GateWay will permit switching

between the two applications. An obvious use might be to enable cutting and pasting between two different geoPaint or geoWrite documents, or between a geoWrite and a geoPaint document. Both applications must be on the same disk. Accessories and/or applications can be jointly held open.

GateWay works in both 64 and 128 mode. In 128 mode the menu has an option that allows the user to switch between 40 and 80 columns.

TopDesk: Quincy Softworks in the United States acquired North American distribution rights to a German adaptation of GEOS 2.0. Some of its special features, such as the use of folders, simultaneously open and visible directories of several drives, and copying among all drives without auto swapping, are available without an REU.

When an REU is added, a third and fourth different drive can be installed. GEOS 2.0, gateWay, and the BBG programs stop at a maximum of three drive positions.

Although all four directories can be simultaneously visible, and copying can take place among all of them by dragging and dropping, auto swapping to the first two positions takes place once an application or data file is launched in the third and/or fourth locations. The auto swap feature can be switched on or off from the menu.

If RamDeskTop is switched on from the menu, the open desktop directory will still be open when the user returns from using an application. Otherwise the directory window would have to be manually reopened once the application was finished.

With my 2 megabyte BBGram, TopDesk creates two 1581 RAM drives. My 1541 II is Drive A, the BBG provides RAM drives B and C, and my 1581 drive D.

GEOS Without An REU

By John Elliott. GEOS 2.0, gateWay, and TopDesk are quite useful even without an REU.

With the Configure file installed in GEOS 2.0 on each disk used, two different "real" drives can be

simultaneously used. Basic files can be run from the Desktop. Large color-coded icons are used to indicate the purpose of each file. The Diskcopy program will work even with only one drive.

GateWay does not have a disk copy program. A basic program cannot be launched from the Desktop. The icon identification symbols are the size of print on the directory, and are not color-coded. Quick access to all disk files is possible both by scrolling and by a "Browser" which will search the directory for a file name, or initial letters and a wildcard symbol. When several files have been sent to the trashcan, any or all of them can be recovered so long as no disk or file operations have since taken place. Without ram expansion, the filePad can only handle 72 file names, instead of 144. When a second disk drive is configured, file name capacity drops further.

Two useful gateWay documents available from the menu are ScrapPeek, which allows viewing of a Photo Scrap without entering geoPaint, and Touch, which updates the date and time on any selected files on the filePad, using the clock in the CMD hard drive.

TopDesk even without an REU features simultaneously viewable windows of each directory and folders.

Windows of each directory can be vertically and horizontally altered in shape. Scrolling horizontally can take place within the windows. While without an REU only two drive directory windows can be open at once, four can be opened if two different disks in the same drive are examined sequentially, or if the contents of a folder are also looked at. Copying among any windows is always possible.

Folders: Folders allow grouping of files on the same topic. For example I placed geoWrite and several text files in a folder I called "Write". The several separate file icons disappeared and were replaced by a file folder icon labeled "Write". I included files from other drives, which risks problems if I do not reinsert the correct disks in each drive in the future. Copying can take place of folders between disks or drives. Folders can be erased.

The American distributor has added

Better Than Your Local News Server?

by Jeff Jones. I used to think that there wasn't much activity in the Commodore newsgroups. I'd go to comp.sys.cbm and find little or no posts from day to day. Clearly there was more because I would see fragments of discussions, some heated — but only *fragments*. For instance news.softdisk.com never showed me the original posting about Maurice Randall's disappointment, but it showed me two or three of the articles of despair that followed. Today Softdisk showed me only about twelve new articles. Deja News showed me 2500+ articles. I can search tens of thousands of old articles in its nearly incomprehensible 300 gigabyte three-year archive.

Deja News also arranges articles so that you can easily follow the entire thread, even when it's cross-posted across newsgroups. You can check author profiles (a feature which I don't know if I like) and see other posts by the author. I checked my own profile and found that I didn't say anything I was embarrassed about, but I responded to some posts with offensive subject lines, and winced when I saw my name next to them as if I wrote the original article.

About a year ago CMD's Doug Cotton suggested I try Deja News and I wasn't quick to respond. Now I make a visit to Deja News every other day. The discussion on programming at the end of this newsletter comes from Deja News. I found it enthralling, and I would have missed it with a regular news reader.

Deja News Launches Major Assault On Spam

Offers Internet Users "Spam-Free" Access to Internet Discussion Forums, including Usenet Newsgroups

AUSTIN, TX (December 8, 1997) - Deja News, Inc. (http://www.dejanews.com), the worldwide leader for Internet-based discussion forums, today unveiled an aggressive program to eliminate unwanted and abusive postings or "spam" from its Web site.

More than 3.5 million people visit the Deja News Web site each month to search and participate in discussion forums, including over 50,000 Usenet newsgroups. It's estimated that nearly two-thirds of the content added to Usenet newsgroups daily is spam-related, creating a major impediment to information access and causing frustration for users.

"Newsgroups are a tremendous source of information and exchange used by over 24 million people around the world," said Guy Hoffman, CEO and president of Deja News, Inc. "Unfortunately, a small number of individuals and companies are abusing the Usenet to the detriment of everyone else. We can't eliminate spam from the Usenet itself, but as the leading supplier of Usenet access, we can eliminate most of it from our site. This will dramatically improve our users' experiences and impact our bottom line through reduced storage costs."

Each day, Deja News receives Usenet newsgroup feeds totaling about five gigabytes, which translates into approximately 730,000 messages. About two-thirds of those messages are either spam or messages sent to cancel spam. On December 1, 1997, Deja News began filtering these items out of its daily newsfeed. Within a month, the company will remove spam that is archived in its existing 300 gigabyte database, which dates back to March 1995.

Advanced, Spam-Busting Methodology: Deja News has implemented multi-level spam filters incorporating technology from such stalwart spam fighters as Cancelmoose and Zippo News Service. This is supplemented by proprietary artificial intelligence spam filtering techniques. Deja News Founder and Chief Technology Officer Steve Madere noted, "Spam removal is a huge step forward for online discussions, effectively solving the main problem facing Internet discussions today. While we won't eliminate every single piece of spam from our database, encountering spam at Deja News will become exceedingly rare."

Job Posting Segmentation Also Introduced: In a related project, Deja News is moving job-related messages to a separate area on its site. Whether you're an individual searching for a position or an employer looking for qualified applicants, Usenet newsgroups are one of the best and largest sources of job information on the Web. For example, Deja News has about 10 million job-related messages on its site. By segmenting these messages in a separate area, Deja News enables those users specifically interested in the job information to go directly to it and quickly and easily search for pertinent information.

About Deja News, Inc.: Deja News is the leading source for discussion forums on the World Wide Web. Founded in May 1995, Deja News provides an easy and powerful Web interface to participate in discussions with people of like interests and for searching discussion forums, including Usenet newsgroups. Deja News' eMarketing services offer marketers a comprehensive suite of Internet-based marketing programs for rapidly reaching and influencing large, highly segmented and dynamic audiences. Deja News serves as the discussion forum search resource for America Online, AT&T WorldNet Service, Bell South, Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, Microsoft's Internet Explorer, The Microsoft Network, Open Text, WebCrawler and Yahoo! Deja News is free to users and can be found on the Web at http://www.dejanews.com.

For more information:
comments@dejanews.com

(Continued from page 4)
to the distribution two programs that allow moving and sorting of files on the deskpad, even if they are in a folder- without requiring opening the folders.

TopDesk works in both 64 and 128 mode. It will not recognize two different drives in 128 mode unless an REU is present.

GEOWIZARD: Jim Collette in 1990 produced an auto-executing file that will run under all of the GEOS environments that I own. Once it is installed, it will call up at the click of a mouse button, any GEOS application or desk accessory, while you are at the Desktop or in another application or accessory. It will do screen dumps as either photo scraps or paint files.

Most importantly, in a manner similar to Switcher in the gateWay, it allows any combination of two applications or accessories to be simultaneously open.

Geowizard will run in 40 or 80 columns. Application compatibilities differ between the two modes.

This program requires an REU. It will not work with a 128k REU. If it is used with the 256k REU, there will not be room for a ram disk. A 512k REU will provide both a 1571 ram disk and access to GEOWIZARD.

Storm Disks: As well as "normal" GEOS programs that convert images to and from GEOS format, and analyze geoWrite word count and distribution, Joe Buckley developed two groups of REU dependent GEOS programs. REU ZAP II saves a RAM 1541 or 1571 to disk and reloads it with a mouse click.

ANY BOOT boots GEOS in 64 or 128 mode from any drive type. Quick Brown Box BOOT boots GEOS from a 64K Quick Brown Box.

These programs are designed for GEOS 2.0, but should work with both gateWay and TopDesk.

Xetec Interfaces

By John Elliott. For many years I used an Epson Homewriter 10 printer with my VIC 20 and Commodore 64. Through button control I could select near letter quality. emphasized, double strike, or compressed modes. I had access to only one font unless I used GEOS or a special Speedscript patch.

When I received the Star 1000C Rainbow, I was able to not only print in color, but use four built-in fonts. The advantage of the built-in fonts over those of GEOS and the Speedscript patch was that their density was many times that of those drawn in graphics mode by GEOS and Speedscript. I was also now able to use the autoreverse function that considerably enhanced both The Write Stuff Illustrator program and Ben Johnson's scanner that sits on the printer head.

When I obtained a Star 1000 that was not Commodore compatible. I had to use an Xetec Super Graphic Jr. interface box so that the computer and printer could communicate. The advice of Eric Lee, the creator of The Write Stuff, was that I set the box for transparent and ignore it. In all ways then, for The Write Stuff, I might as well have used the Commodore compatible version of the printer.

When I later bought the Xetec Sr. interface. and read its manual. I decided to compare it with the Jr. to see what I had gained in my upgrade. It turned out that Junior is not a one trick pony. (To follow that reference. check out Paul Simon in "Annie Hall").

The Xetec Super Graphic Junior: There are many print out possibilities that work with my Jr. that I could not produce with a direct connection to my 1000C. In direct mode I can send print statements that will result in either upper case and graphics printouts. or upper and lower case and graphics.

More important to my basic programming students. I can output a program listing in several formats. With appropriate commands to an open channel. I can decide that the "clear screen" command be shown as a graphic (a reversed heart). the keys pressed (SS for shift/S). or the ASCII values (176). My students were frequently confused by

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THE TORONTO BOARD OF HEALTH HAS PROPOSED THAT WARNING SIGNS BE PLACED ON BOOZE BOTTLES TO TIP OFF DRINKERS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE PERIL OF POUNDING A PINT OR TWO.

1. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may cause you to wake up with breath that could knock a buzzard off a garbage truck at 100 yards.

2. WARNING: consumption of alcohol is a major factor in dancing like a fool.

3. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may cause you to tell the same boring story over and over again until your friends want to *SMASH YOUR HEAD IN.*

4. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may cause you to thay shings like thish.

5. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may cause you to tell the boss what you REALLY think while photocopying your butt at the office Christmas party.

6. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may lead you to believe that ex-lovers are really dying for you to telephone them at 4 in the morning.

7. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may leave you wondering what the hell ever happened to your pants anyway.

8. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may cause you to roll over in the morning and see something really scary (whose species and or name you can't remember).

9. WARNING: consumption of alcohol is the leading cause of inexplicable rug burn on the forehead.

10. WARNING: consumption of alcohol may create the illusion that you are tougher, handsomer and smarter than some really, really big guy named Psycho.

the graphics symbols for commands, and I think would have appreciated the keys pressed alternative.

I can also perform screen dumps if I first run the program listed in the Jr. manual. The low resolution dump will print whatever keyboard letters and graphics are on the screen. The high resolution dot matrix dump will print out whatever is in the bit map area.

This usually means that if a graphic can be exited (by run/stop restore, or a special key), it is possible to then load the dump program and print from the now invisible bit map memory.

Fonts: Through switches, the Xetec Super Graphic Jr. can alternate between one near letter quality and draft fonts. Xetec switch changes are recognized instantly and do not require a resetting of either the computer or printer. If the draft mode is chosen, then whatever modes are selected on the printer will be recognized.

The Senior Manual/Disk: If the demonstration program that is on the Senior disk is used with the Xetec Super Graphic Jr., it is possible to print from disk a hi resolution image. The image can be printed as a positive or in reverse. Several sizes and page locations can also be selected.
It would be worth a Jr. owner's effort to obtain the Senior disk, simply for this reason.

The Xetec Senior: There is no interface called the Xetec Senior. Articles use this name to differentiate it from the box that is called Xetec Super Graphic Jr. The box, manual and disk are labeled Xetec Super Graphic.
It has three advantages over the Jr. It has a reset switch; it will hold two uploadable fonts at a time; it has a larger print buffer.

The Reset Button: When my printer stopped in mid carriage after printing, hitting the reset button returned the head to the margin. While special print commands were cleared, the uploaded fonts were retained. With the Jr., I had to either reset or turn off my computer, losing the word processing program.

Uploadable Fonts: The Senior can hold two fonts at a time besides the permanently resident NLQ. These can be loaded from the disk that comes with the interface using the enclosed Loader program. The fonts are either of a regular or super type. The super font has double the width density of a regular font. With programs provided on the disk, it is possible to modify an existing font or create a new one. The new fonts can be of the normal or super type.

As fonts are uploaded to the interface buffer, space to hold what is typed is reduced. The buffer empty of extra fonts can hold a few pages of text. Within seconds after sending a print command, access to the computer is returned to the user, while the printer continues to print from the buffer.

Two normal fonts in the buffer increase the waiting time before it is possible to resume typing. Two supper fonts in the buffer usually force the user to wait until printing is completed.

Text Control: The Xetec Jr., using embedded commands, provides underlining capability. The Sr. uses embedded commands to select fonts and control their size, pitch and intensity. Sub and superscripts are also controllable.

The Xetec Super Graphic Gold: Probably because of its greater cost, the Gold interface is the rarest of the Xetec line. Its capabilities are such though that I have seen want ads for broken Gold interfaces. I suppose the hope was that they could be easily repaired.

While it was still in business, Xetec did provide a lifetime repair guarantee.

The Gold has the same features as the Sr. It can perform those services however, in greater numbers and in a wider range of situations. The Super Graphic Gold has all of the attributes of the Senior, but in greater number. There are four built in fonts and four user fonts. This increased number is due to the larger 32k ram and 32k ROM.

Nonvolatile Memory: Since the Super Graphic Gold uses its own power supply, its memory is nonvolatile. Once the user fonts are loaded, they remain so long as the interface is plugged into its power source, even if the computer is turned off. I can print text to the interface, with the printer off. If I turn the computer off and return the next day, the text will print out as soon as I turn on the computer and printer. This feature would be useful if the user wished to continue another computer task without printing the document at that time.

Super Graphic Gold also will print 32 block hi res pictures, so long as their file name is given a "p." prefix. These pictures can be printed immediately. A single picture can be stored in memory, and printed whenever a command is given, so that text and image can be mixed. With the independent power supply, Super Graphic Gold can provide instant access to eight fonts and one image.

Images: Code sent to the command channel will determine image size, density, location on the page, and whether it is negative or positive.

Fonts: Super Graphic Gold fonts are different from the Senior fonts. A program is provided that converts those on the Senior Disk to Super Graphic Gold format. A font creation program is also on the disk.
Of the many font commands, the most novel is the one that creates a tall version of each letter. The impression is of a font that is about twice normal height, but the normal width. One user stated that he would use this attribute for his Christmas letters instead of GEOS.

Banners: A command to the appropriate channel will print very large text horizontally in the font and attributes selected. Degree of smoothing can also be controlled. While Print Shop will do banners, I have found the letters to be very blocky. This is not as true of Super Graphic Gold banner letters.

What is not required: Although there are programs provided on disk to convert and create fonts, load fonts, and configure the interface, everything I have described can be done by direct single line typed commands. Some can also be set by interface mechanical switch.

Direct Mode vs. Word Processor: A single line of type will send commands to the appropriate Super Graphic Gold channel to

accomplish each of these tasks. Some commands can be combined on the same line.

Assignment of these commands to a reversed letter within a word processor will accomplish the same task as the document is printed. Some Super Graphic Gold users save special text files that only contain the arrangement of commands required for the special effects they want with the Super Graphic Gold. They then type text within the rest of the empty document.

I said, incorrectly, that the Super Graphic Gold has eight available fonts. Commands can be placed within a document in a word processor that will load new fonts to a font channel location within the interface. User font number one, for example, could have several different fonts automatically loaded to it during the printing of a document. Different images can also be printed at selected locations in the document.

An Admission: I have not been able to use all of these features. I can automatically use all eight fonts in my documents. If I place the font change in the middle of a line though, left margin size changes.

I can use all the image commands in direct mode. Within a word processor, though, I can only print one image, once. Successive images are partly corrupted by parts of the first image.

When I print my banner, the printer after the first letter shifts half a page to the right. Sometimes it completely shuts down my printer.

I have seen all of these features, except the Banner command, demonstrated in BBUG, the now defunct journal of The Write Stuff word processor. On most Super Graphic Gold interfaces, all of these features will work as described. My set-up is not unusual- a C-64 with a Final Cartridge III and a Star NX-1000II printer. I bought my interface used. Either it has become damaged, or there is something wrong with my setting of switches on my Star or Super Graphic Gold.

"Always look on the brighter side of life." Even if I do not master

the problems I have described, I have what amounts to a Senior interface, with eight plus available fonts for any document. I can easily use double high fonts. I can in direct mode place hi res images in several sizes and densities wherever I wish on a page. I can also print to my buffer, and send to printer at my leisure.

Printer Interfaces: Some of us are simply using our interfaces to convince our Commodore that the IBM compatible printer it is connected to is really a Commodore printer. Others are taking advantage of the buffer size to speed up printing, and more quickly regain control of their printer. The largest number may be setting their interfaces to transparent mode, so that they can accomplish non-Commodore tasks such as underlining and printing super- and sub-scripts.

This is partly an argument in favor of examining the options available with the different modes of your interface, whether it be Xetec, Hotshot, or another.

A Caution: If anything except transparent mode is used with Xetec and The Write Stuff, there is a danger of text after open quotation marks being interpreted as commands, rather than text. In other words. use Gold mode, but with care.

Changing Times

By Robin Harbron. I finally got around to watching the Star Wars Trilogy Special Edition videos I bought a few months back. For those of you who don't know, George Lucas and his team went back to the original films from 14, 17 and 20 years ago, digitally remastered them, and also added some new segments and improved some existing ones. Apparently these changes are things Lucas had always wanted to do. but wasn't able to before, due to lack of money and/or technology. I really enjoyed watching these films again (I did see the original Star Wars in the theater. although I was only 5 at the time) and particularly liked looking for all the new parts.

This same sense of wonder carries over to my favorite computers. Every time I get a new piece of hardware for

my Commodore. I have to try it out with all my old software. It has happened probably a dozen times in my fourteen years of Commodore use. The first time was when I bought my 1541. I marveled at the fast load times. the huge collections of games on disk my friends had - I had a fantastic time transferring all the little programs I had made and saved on my Datasette over to the disk drive. Then I got a 1702 monitor - I loaded every piece of software I owned, just to see it in color! Amazing, how sharp the picture was (and is - it's still running to this day). I still have a very clear picture in my mind of the very first time I ran Karateka - the amazing graphics and sound, the atmosphere.

Then a number of years later I bought my first utility cartridge - a Super Snapshot V5. Once again, I rediscovered my computer - amazingly fast loading, which worked with a surprising number of games - the game cheat functions, where I gave myself infinite lives and finally beat a few of those games that had been haunting me for years - the machine code monitor and sprite monitor, where I could gaze into the inner workings of these games - the Snapshot utility, which allowed me to freeze games in progress, and transfer the amazing programs that came on the British C-64 magazine covertapes to disk - and so many other features. I'm thrilled that the Super Snapshot is back in production. And the most recent batch of toys I've bought - my SwiftLink and Turbo232 which have allowed me to use Novaterm with my USR 33.6 modem - my FD-2000 which brings cheap. cheap disk storage to us. on very easy to find 3.5" HD disks - JiffyDOS which allows many more of my programs to be fastloaded than the Super Snapshot does - and finally my SuperCPU. The SuperCPU had me digging through my boxes of old disks. trying out all the games that were just too annoying before. So many of those old type-in BASIC games are totally new with the SuperCPU. I must have spent another hour with the classic Salvage Diver from Ahoy! - All because of the wonder of 20Mhz.

There's also the old hardware I

could never afford when I was young. that I now have access to - light pens. Koala pads. speech synthesizers. musical keyboard overlays - even printers! I've had many an enjoyable evening finally getting to use these things at home. where I've purchased them for a few dollars.

When I'm tired of trying the old software out, I think back on the software ideas I used to have, but would never attempt, or quickly give up on, because I lacked the skills or tools to complete them. Now, because of the huge amount of technical information about the C-64 available on the Internet, I am able to look up just about anything that would have stumped me earlier. If I can't find it somewhere on the Internet, I can chat with some Commodore friends on IRC, or Email some of the many people I've met - there's sure to be someone who can answer my questions.

Things like the Super Snapshot, my REU and my FD-2000 have sped up development time so much that I don't lose patience with what I'm doing. My current assembler (Style's Turbo Macro Pro) allows me to keep my source code banked in the REU, out of harm's way from crashes. It also works well with the FD-2000, encouraging me to save often. Even if my source grows to 100 blocks, I can save over 60 versions of it on a single floppy. There's no way I'd save it as often with just a slow, low-capacity 1541 - and then if it were to crash, and I had been working for half an hour without saving it - I'd probably be too frustrated to pick it up again, and keep working on it.

There are also programs that are simply beyond what a 1 MHz C-64 with 64k can do. A game I've had in mind for quite a while simply requires more than the C-64's resources can offer. I had temporarily moved over to the Amiga 500 in 1988, hoping to be able to learn that machine, and program my game over there. Unfortunately, I didn't have the skills or tools to work well in assembly on that platform, so my hopes were dashed. Then I heard about the C65, and thought that this would finally be the machine I could master - but was sadly disappointed

when I discovered the original advertisements for the C65 were not completely true - the C65 was just an orphaned prototype. Finally. I obtained a SuperCPU. and now having fitted it with 16MB of RAM. I'm ready to take on that game finally - if only I had the time!

There's also the idea of taking old programs you, or others have written, and improving them with your newfound tools and toys and skills. For instance, you can take programs and make them "fit for the 90's", the way LOADSTAR often advertised their own updated software - make them SUPERCPU aware and multi-drive capable (not just device #8). I spent a few days making the excellent Paperclip Publisher a more '90's program. Overall, the program was well written, and well adjusted to life at 20mhz, but one important thing didn't work - the mouse. With my Super Snapshot and 1351 manual. I managed to find the delay loop that allows the mouse to work properly, and squeezed some extra bytes of space out of it, to allow for an extra loop around the loop to create enough delay for the mouse to work properly. Also, there were no 24-pin printer drivers included with Paperclip Publisher, so I modified one of the existing drivers to work properly with my Panasonic KXP-1124 and Canon BJC-4100.

We should keep in mind how far the standard 8-bit Commodore system has come in 15 years. It's easy to look back now and see where mistakes were made along the line. We may be nearing the end of the innovations we'll see. Or perhaps we're looking at the beginning of a whole new machine that will mix both what we enjoy so much about our current systems, and what we lack so much as well. Time will tell.

Lucas wanted to go back to his original creations, and make them right, now that he had what he lacked before - we can all learn from this, programmers and users alike.

Interesting "Young Programmers" Debate

The following was found at Deja News. I would have missed this if I had scanned the message boards through normal means. News.softdisk .com only showed two of these messages.

billth@hotmail.com: That is a load of crap. I am a 15 year old programmer and never once have I bragged about my age. I respect the older generation of programmers, and find that it is them who are the ones willing to help us when we encounter difficulties. I feel that with regard to programming there should be no reference to age, to me it doesn't matter what age you are. If you try hard enough the least then you can usually accomplish what you set out to. Why argue and brag about our ages. Nearly every one on this newsgroup has skill at what they do, and those who are just beginning are putting in their top effort.
Chris Sharkey <billth@hotmail.com

Carcass Creation Service: I've actually wanted to get this off my chest for quite some time, and since this seems to be an appropriate thread for my commentary, here goes ..

First of all, let me tell you a bit about my start in programming. I was 10 years old, and with my paper route earnings, I managed to buy myself a used VIC-20 .. By the time I was 15, I had graduated to the Commodore 64 and was coding pure 6502/10 Asm .. I still, to this day, program C-64 demos in pure Asm ..

Today's "Young Programmers" are basically hacks .. they write a few lines of Qbasic code or steal some C source from an FTP site, compile it successfully and then proceed to openly advertise themselves as "Programmers" .. They consider Visual C++ a low level language .. they can barely read hexadecimal .. they use a calculator for binary conversions, if they ever even bother to learn binary at all .. they don't bother with memory management as the compiler will take care of that for them, thus resulting in a

100k "Hello World!" program ..
Logical Operators? Huh? Direct bitmap manipulation? Huh? Any kind of sort except for bubble sorting? Huh?

1 - In this day and age, 15 year old "Programmers" are, by default, lame .. They really don't have a clue.. Your age is not something you want to be advertising .. there are of course the rare exceptions to this rule. I know a few really good 6502/10 Asm coders who happen to be young.

2 - Doing HTML does NOT qualify you as a "Programmer". There is more skill involved in using a pre-WYSIWYG word processor than there is in throwing together some HTML.

3 - Including 300k .wav files in your programs for 5 seconds of audio is NOT COOL .

4 - CODER sounds much cooler than PROGRAMMER .. for some reason, whenever someone claims they are a PROGRAMMER, I think to myself "DeVry Grad..."

5 - Having read "Learn to program C/C++ in 21 days" does not make you a "Programmer" ..

Coding is about long nights staring at 1000 lines of code, wondering why it keeps messing up, and REFUSING to go to bed until you have debugged the sucker [f-word replaced throughout]. A coder is not afraid of low level stuff. A coder does not think W95 is "Kewl". A coder wants to get the job done in as little bytes as possible, with the fastest code possible .. A coder realizes that there is no such thing as cheating, if tables will speed up the code by 10%, the coder will use tables ..

Anyhow, you catch my drift, I'm sure .. don't bother flaming me, as I really could care less what you think of me anyway ..

rdt@cnl.com.au: You're a #@$%head. Who are you to say what a coder is/isn't? I'm sure there are lots of young "coders" who can't do crap and brag about it, but at least they're trying. When you were young you were probably the worst one to brag about your programming skills. Forget the C-64, its old, I'm really sure you're gonna make a career out of making stupid crap in asm for the C-64... Oh yeah, and so what if you don't think

including sound files in your programs is cool, I happen to think it is. Do you even know what you're talking about? I think you've been by yourself for too long.

Carcass:A few things I never once said that I plan on making a career from 6502/10 Asm .. do NOT make assumptions like that .. I am a Comp. Sci. student, and yes, of course I program on other platforms and etc .. but NOTHING matches the C-64's architecture in terms of raw accessibility .. you can directly access everything on this machine! I still do it because I enjoy it.

Do I know what I'm talking about? Of course I do.. I am, after all, your intellectual superior. Please stop sending Microsoft Email, they will not include your "Bowling League Score Keeper v2.01" in Windows 98 as an accessory.

I did not say SOUND FILES are not cool, I said WAV FILES are not cool .. you see, you being the GUI bound lamer that you are, you immediately equate SOUND FILE with WAV .. that simply is not so .. there ARE other compressed sound formats. Get it? My real point was that 300k for a few seconds of lame audio is a waste of disk space.

Yes, the C-64 is quite old. Which probably means that I'm older than you are. Remember what your mother keeps telling you, respect your elders, or she'll put a BIOS password on your Compaq Presario.

rdt@cnl.com.au: Ooooh, scary...

Chris Shilliday <cyber@bright.net: Dammit! I've been waiting for that new Bowling Score Keeper!

Marko.Makela@HUT.FI: And I've been waiting for the Bowling Goalkeeper!

Chris Herron <chris@spider.com: Carcass Creation Service wrote:

First of all, let me tell you a bit about my start in programming . I was 10 years old, and with my paper route earnings, I managed to buy myself a

used VIC-20 .. By the time I was 15, I had graduated to the Commodore 64 and was coding pure 6502/10 Asm .. I still, to this day, program C-64 demos in pure Asm ..

That's nothing. When I was 5, I wrote my own raytracer using punchcards on my homebuilt valve-powered computer. I'm now 9 years old and I'm planning to rule the Universe by the power of my immense, bullet-proof ego. All other 9 year olds must die, for no other can be as good as I.

marek.kleczynski: Oh, yeah? Well, I was 2 when I made my very first compiler using only an abacus :)

martijnb@mud.stack.nl (Martijn van Buul): It occurred to me that marek.kleczynski wrote:

> Oh, yeah? Well, I was 2 when I made my very first compiler using only an abacus :)

Hah! My first words were

```
init    sei
        lda #<newIRQ
        sta $0314
        lda # >newIRQ
        sta $0315
        lda $d01A
        ora #1
        sta $d01a
        lda #100
        sta $d012
        cli
        rts
NewIrq  lda $d019
        sta $d019
        and #1
        bne ownirq
        jmp $ea31
ownirq  lda $d012
        cmp #100
        beq skip
        inc $d020
        lda #100
        sta $d012
        bne skip2
skip    dec $d020
        lda #110
        sta $d012
skip2   pla
```

tay
    pla
    tax
    pla
    rti
:-)
Martijn

Jeff Jones: Oh yeah, well then the doctor slapped my butt, my reply was:

00000110 00001011!

And I meant it in screen code!

**Stefan Boberg
<stefan.boberg@team17.com:**
"Programmers" .. Yeah... Today's youth ... Spoilt brats. Rubbish. Blah. In *my* time we had to code in binary, in the snow outside my father's shed, wearing only a pair of underpants.

kh6zv9@magnolia.pe.net (bob masse): Kids! They don't believe me when I tell them that my first computer was made out of wood, and we liked it!

tekell@ripco.com (Tekell): Had to mow lawns all summer to buy enough diodes to hand solder together a diode stack memory upgrade!! All those nights with the wire wrap!! Endless hours typing in those Magazine programs only to have them not run because of myt numorous typeos!! Those S-100 Bus computers didn't use phone lines but string and Tin cans!!Oh yeah I remember them days!! :)

WStreett@shell.monmouth.com:
Well, in my time we had to code because that was the only way to talk to our fathers.. getting close to the computer took a request and a 3 week waiting period to get inside the "secure" area. Actually getting to run a computer wasn't possible.

Daniel Terrill: Hell, at least you had *binary*! I once wrote a Prolog compiler using nothing but zeros! Kids these days...

Mark Putt: *Zeros*! At least you had Zeros! By cracky!!! When I was your age we had to make our own punch cards outta old tires. Then we had to

hike 15 miles (in the snow, uphill both ways) to the old vacuum tube computer. Compiling took months and if you had any errors you got beat! These kids nowadays!!! Don't know how good they got it. Games!!! Only computer game we had was a computer version of tic tac toe! BUT, it only had one square, and no X's or O's

Daniel Terrill: Ha! I wish we had *tires*. We made our punchcards out of Buffalo hide, spliced with corn silk! Sure it would GPF a bit, but I coded a basic version of DOOM on the side of my cave!

Michael Duffy: My goodness. My advice: Join the Amish. It sounds like you'll be a lot happier in their world where you don't have to worry about inevitable technological advances. Just a thought, Michael Duffy

Sean Timarco Baggaley : Carcass, I hate to break this to you, but I've been programming since 1981 and have yet to see any logical reason why doing hex or binary math in one's head is inherently 'better' or 'superior' to doing it on that one-and-a-half-grand PC I've got sitting in front of my face. Computers are known as 'computers' for a bloody good reason: they compute. They do math. Lots of it. Very quickly. That's what we write programs for. So why waste your investment by adding %10010101 to %11111010 in your head when WinCalc is just a mouse-click away?

Doing math in your head is only 'big' and 'clever' if you can do it more quickly and accurately than the tools you have to hand. I'm bad at math. I have trouble remembering a number long enough to subtract another one from it — I admit it openly. But that has never stopped me from writing games that have been published and reviewed with high ratings. It's the concepts — the principles — that matter.

True. Owning a hammer doesn't make you a carpenter overnight. You have to know what to do with it; how and when to use it. The language is a tool. Nothing more.

rhabal@aol.com: I really think that the bitter poster (we all know who) needs to get a life. I would like to thank him for providing me with some amusing commentary.

First off, I suggest a girlfriend. A commodore 64 does not count, and neither does a girl/woman who speaks assembly in Commodore mnemonics.

Second, I think he needs to recognize that today's youths are tomorrow's decision makers. He is performing a disservice to society by discouraging kids from taking on programming projects - whether it is in Logo, VB, HTML, Visual C++, and stifling their creativity and curiosity because of his twisted and one-dimensional view of the world. Anyone who tries to do something should get the respect they deserve just for trying. After all, nobody is born knowing assembly. You have to learn to crawl before you can walk.

Third, I shift to music. Charlie Parker is arguably one of the greatest jazz musicians to ever live, and his contributions to the field of music are vast.

He started playing on a plastic saxophone that sounded like a sick goose, because he couldn't afford a real one, and later became one of the greats. The point is he tried to learn an art against all odds using resources at hand (he was also a druggie but that's besides the point :). Good thing he didn't get flamed as a kid for playing on a fake horn. Learning programming in a comfortable environment (high level languages, etc.) develops ones cognitive and logical thinking abilities. These 'kewl' programmers could grow up to be leaders in other fields such as medicine, physics, art, or whatever, and use the computing skills they learned as kids - however basic - to enhance their productivity in their respective fields, and further benefit society.

Nobody is claiming that this man is not good at what he does. In fact if I ever need to have a Commodore program developed in assembly I know where to go. But to enforce his opinions against these kids who are just discovering a new world of computing is not right.

Live and let live.

Glenn Corpes: In-your-head hex knowledge was one of the most important programming skills about ten years ago. A hex calculator was an important tool until good source level debuggers were available. I can't even remember the last time I used HEX. Sure, understanding binary is fundamental to programming but being able to add hex numbers in your head is about as useful as memorizing ASCII codes or all the parameters on all of those programs in autoexec.bat.

David Wareing: When I was a boy, we didn't have computer games. For entertainment, we had to bang rocks together. And my family lived in a shoe box in the middle of the street... Boring.Spare us the platform diatribes. This group needs them like it needs more bullet velocity discussions. However, if you'd like to show us something like Myth or Quake running on your beloved C-64, then I'm sure we'd all be most interested. (Until then, I think we'll all just have to accept that the world has moved on, and arguing about semi-extinct platforms is about as useful as stapling jelly.) — David Wareing dwareing@adelaide.on.net Macintosh Game Development

Gorm David Lai: just to continue this thread. I was at a computer party, just after Christmas here in Denmark, and in the C-64 demo competitions, I saw some amazing things, like 3d bumpmapped vector cubes, and 3d phong shaded vector cubes. There was a big scene where you flew through a flatfilled vector city, with cars driving around on the street. It was all very impressive. I have also seen stuff like voxel landscapes, and wolfenstein-like games (with monsters and lots of action!) on that machine.

The time for C-64 is definitely over, but one thing we all could learn from the C-64, and which most people seem to have either forgotten or never been, is how to be decent coders!

Sincerely

Gorm Lai - 1st year computer science and mathematics student.

rdt@cnl.com.au: Yeah, well what do ya want us to do, go out and buy commodore 64's and learn asm just so we can write some crappy 16 color demo? If we're all supposed to do that, the world will get no-where. If win95 is so crap, then why is it probably the most popular os? And what's wrong with mice, even the C-64 had one.

martijnb@mud.stack.nl (Martijn van Buul): It'd be a good thing to buy a book called "how do I truncate lines in a message to something like 70 chars" for starters. I truly think that learning assembly on a small 8-bit computer (whether that's a Commodore 64 or not isn't really important) (They're the best though:P) has its positive sides. A 6502 has only few opcodes, the OS'es of these machines are quite simple, etc. The point is that you're *forced* to do some efficient programming, thinking 'bout your routines, use as little memory as possible for your data, etc. Today's PC's are shipped with an enormous amount of memory, and, programmers tend to get used to that. Does a word processor truly need 70 MB of disk space as a bare minimum ? I think that's rather pathetic. Writing stuff (esp. demos) on a simple, limited machine does have its educational value, indeed. I don't say we should throw those PC's into the trash bin and get back to the old 8-bit computers. I quit doing 'serious' work on my C-64 long ago. I too stopped learning assembly for all the platforms I use, and switched over to C, mainly because it makes it easier to transfer my programs to another platform like the Unixes, BeOS,AmigaOS, MacOS, SunOS, GEM (and, _sometimes_ windoze too!). However,doing assembly on the 64 has taught me some lessons which still come at hand these days. I don't say GUI's are bad because they're a GUI in the first place. Some applications just need a graphic environment. However, there's a lot of crap lately that absolutely doesn't need a nice window with fancy colored buttons, bells, rings and whatever. Name me a _sole_reason why I should

use WinZIP, while ARJ (for dos) is much much more versatile? Some people tend to believe that the user interface is all that counts. The actual code and usefulness of a program is neglected. But what is a nicely designed user interface without a good designed program behind it? Nothing, indeed. My last remark about Windows 95: There's a gigantic difference between"the most popular OS" and "the most USED OS". I use windows 95 every now and then, but, honestly, I don't love it at all. Windows 95 is a nice user interface with a crappy program behind it. It's a miracle that it actually _does_ something useful. Anyway; I don't state myself as The Best Coding Guru Around (definitely not the case), but someone who managed to design a user interface in Visual Basic isn't a programmer by default. Definitely not.— Martijn van Buul, martijnb@stack.nl

Nick Pleis: It seems to me that some people have lost sight of what the most important aspect of a GUI is, USABILITY. GUI's open up these cryptic machines we call computers to millions of people. GUI's, like win95, simplify the day to day operations of a computer immensely. No need to learn those arcane Unix commands...and no more banging heads with the often unfriendly dos-prompt.Its just point-click-go. With GUI's more people use the computer. More people using the computer means more people who will potentially buy software (games in particular — just for the relevance of this news group)

So yes, a elegantly designed interface *IS* important. Most software has a do or die period of roughly 5 minutes. A program that is easy to use, that is functional but not complicated, and a program that looks nice will quickly find a permanent spot on someone's Hard Drive. You may write the best word processor EVER...BUT without a good UI you're not going to sell many copies. That said, I think that you do make a valid point that it's important not to lose sight of the fact that behind that UI needs to be something solid. But please, don't deny that a solid UI and

the choice of OS('s) that you choose to run this program on play a important role in the failure/success of a product.

Why Microsoft May Be In Trouble with The Government

By Jeff Jones. I found out last week that Microsoft, author of the C-64/128 operating system, and currently under fire from the federal government, might have better luck with the government if they played politics the same way other big companies do. Unlike ADM, AT&T, and thousands of other corporations, Microsoft apparently has little interest in the confidence men in Washington, forking over only about $40,000 last year to specific candidates while corporations smaller and larger freely give millions to both sides of the aisle. Why should a money-grubbing Congressman or Senator intervene on Microsoft's behalf when Microsoft refuses to line their pockets with millions of dollars? People accuse Microsoft of trying to take over the world, but it appears that they merely want to do business the old fashioned way.

Microsoft employees complain that lately they're treated like pariahs, as if they work for a company that kills kids or sells poison to the public. Through it all, Microsoft, one of the largest companies in the world, has kept away from the criminal but "legal" practice of paying protection money to Congress, and then sending lobbyists to Washington to wine and dine people who are supposed to represent *us*.

AT&T has 50 full-time representatives in Washington to Microsoft's three. AT&T donated $1.25 million in PAC contributions to both parties in the last election cycle. Microsoft gave $43,500. I'm only using AT&T as an example here. These figures appeared in the January 8, 1998 issue of Slate Magazine. Admittedly a free Microsoft publication – but it seems that Microsoft is in trouble for the "un-American" of giving away products instead of *bribes* — oops! I meant *protection money* — oops! I meant *campaign contributions*!

Jeff Jones Quoted On CNN!

By Jeff Jones. That's right! If you have been watching CNN's Talkback Live and saw "Jeffrey L. Jones'" quotes come across the screen a few times between commercials, that was me. This is further proof that I am plain poignant! I can fire off a sound byte in a moment. Soundbytes are what they look for. Stuff like: "Sound bytes are destroying America..." will likely get on the air. They don't want a complete thought that comes with commas or semicolons.

I log onto chat.turner.com in channel #talkback at 3:00 p.m. Eastern time at least twice a week when there's *real* news in the air.

The atmosphere in the chat room is pretty cynical, and it's heavily moderated, which keeps the snot-nosed faction disinterested and the chats interesting. Whenever I do get online, I usually stay online a half hour after the show. Join me.

Jeff Jones Starts A Humor Mailing List

By Jeff Jones. I get a lot of Email about the jokes in the LOADSTAR Letter. I scour the Internet for new jokes, and receive a lot of jokes from

subscribers. There're a lot of jokes I find that I don't use, but I do share with my electronic friends. If you'd like to be on my mailing list, send an Email to:

To:jeff@softdisk.com
Subject:subscribe joke list

To unsubscribe send the following:

To:jeff@softdisk.com
Subject:unsubscribe joke list

You'll begin receiving messages within the week.

Strange But True!

☺ Police in Wichita, Kansas, arrested a 22-year-old man at an airport hotel after he tried to pass two (counterfeit) $16 bills.

☺ A man in Johannesburg, South Africa, shot his 49-year-old friend in the face, seriously wounding him, while the two practiced shooting beer cans off each other's head.

☺ A company trying to continue its five-year perfect safety record showed its workers a film aimed at encouraging the use of safety goggles on the job. According to Industrial Machinery News, the film's depiction of gory industrial accidents was so graphic that twenty-five workers suffered minor injuries in their rush to leave the screening room. Thirteen others fainted, and one man required seven stitches after he cut his head falling off a chair while watching the film.

☺ The Chico, California, City Council enacted a ban on nuclear weapons, setting a $500 fine for any detonation within city limits.

☺ A bus carrying five passengers was hit by a car in St. Louis, but by the time police arrived on the scene, fourteen pedestrians had boarded the bus and had begun to complain of whiplash injuries and back pain.

☺ Swedish business consultant Ulf af Trolle labored 13 years on a book about Swedish economic solutions. He took the 250-page manuscript to be copied, only to have it reduced to 50,000 strips of paper in seconds when a worker confused the copier with the shredder.

☺ A convict broke out of jail in Washington D.C., then a few days later accompanied his girlfriend to her trial for robbery. At lunch, he went out for a sandwich. She needed to see him, and thus had him paged. Police officers recognized his name and arrested him as he returned to the courthouse in a car he had stolen over the lunch hour.

☺ Police in Radnor, Pennsylvania, interrogated a suspect by placing a metal colander on his head and connecting it with wires to a photocopy machine. The message "He's lying" was placed in the copier, and police pressed the copy button each time they thought the suspect wasn't telling the truth. Believing the "lie detector" was working, the suspect confessed.

☺ When two service station attendants in Ionia, Michigan, refused to hand over the cash to an intoxicated robber, the man threatened to call the police. They still refused, so the robber called the police and was arrested.

☺ A Los Angeles man who later said he was "tired of walking," stole a steamroller and led police on a 5 mph chase until an officer stepped aboard and brought the vehicle to a stop.

☺ An Absolutely True Finals Story: This past fall semester, at Duke University, there were two sophomores who were taking Organic Chemistry and who did pretty well on all of the quizzes and the midterms and labs, etc., such that going into the final they had a solid 'A'. These two friends were so confident going into the final that the weekend before finals week, even though the Chem final was on Monday, they decided to go up to University of Virginia and party with some friends up there. So they did this and had a great time. However, with their hangovers and everything, they overslept all day Sunday and didn't make it back to Duke until early Monday morning. Rather than taking the final then, what they did was to find Professor Aldric after the final and explain to him why they missed the final. They told him that they went up to UVA for the weekend, and had planned to come back in time to study, but that they had a flat tire on the way back and didn't have a spare and couldn't get help for a long time and so were late getting back to campus. Aldric thought this over and then agreed that they could make up the final on the following day. The two guys were elated and relieved. So, they studied that night and went in the next day at the time that Aldric had told them. He placed them in separate rooms and handed each of them a test booklet and told them to begin. They looked at the first problem, which was something simple about free radical formation and was worth 5 points. "Cool" they thought, "this is going to be easy." They did that problem and then turned the page. They were unprepared, however, for what they saw on the next page. It said: (95 points) Which tire?

☺ Two Los Angeles denizens were taken in for questioning and their boombox and headphones were disassembled when, while waiting for their cousin at LA-X, a 30-year veteran security officer overheard one of them say in a loud voice, "Say, man. Check this out. This is Da Bomb!"

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